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# WINDHAM Sister City Committee

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**DECEMBER, 2012:** In August, I was delighted to travel to Suzdal to visit our friends there and bring some assistance to the orphanage and to the polyclinic. Except for my first day there, it was a very cloudy, cool week; unusual for August. Initially, I went to the festival for the blessing of honey and apples, which is held on the grounds of the monastery. It is an event somewhat like we would experience at any festival held at Griffin Park or the high school. There was music, games, food and ceremonies. Almost everyone in Suzdal was there as well as many visitors.

I met with both Mayors, who greeted me together in the same conference room, and we shared updates and exchanged gifts. I then checked out the progress of the basketball court built on the school grounds by a young man from Holy Cross who had received a grant to do this project. There were some issues on the court surface that were taken care of shortly after my visit, and now the play area is being used by the students.

I went to visit the library, which is always on my list, and presented them with many editions of the magazine *Russian Life*, which is published here in Vermont. This publication is very popular in Suzdal with teachers and students who wish to read articles in English.

As always, I carried monetary gifts from Windham and from individuals meant for the benefit of the orphanage and other general health related assistance. This year, I had a donation of \$1500.00 (3 years of \$500.00 in the town budget) as well as several hundred dollars from individuals to distribute while there. I visited the orphanage and presented half of the donated money there. Many of the children there are severely handicapped and are being taken care of very well.

The balance of the money was donated to my host Olga Kitaeva, who is the head doctor of the polyclinic in Suzdal. She knew exactly what she could purchase that would be of great assistance to all people of Suzdal and a gift that would cause her fellow doctors to be thrilled. She went to Vladimir and purchased 20 automatic blood pressure monitors. Needless to say, I was able to witness the joy on the faces of the doctors as they gazed at the pile of boxes containing the new monitors.

I was presented with a video about Suzdal, which is in English and is a beautiful historical and cultural peek into Suzdal and life there. This video will be playing on local access shortly after the new year.

Many beautifully written wishes for Christmas and the New Year were sent to me by email and text. Yes, Suzdal is in the 21st century. The following is a text from Alexei Kitaev, the son of my host:

*“Wishing you all the timeless treasures of Christmas, the warmth of home, the love of family and the memory of good friends. Have a blessed Christmas.”*

I wish the same to all the people of Windham.

***Barbara Coish***

Dear Mr. David Sullivan!

***Best wishes for a merry Christmas and  
a happy and healthy New 2013 Year!***

Mayor of Suzdal  
Region Michail Ivanov

